
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

APRIL 15, 1896.—Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

Mr. PETTIGREW presented the following

LETTER FROM HENRY W. ELLIOTT, OF CLEVELAND, OHIO, RELATIVE TO CONDITION AND DRIVING OF FUR SEALS ON THE PRIBILOF ISLANDS, BERING SEA, ALASKA.

CLEVELAND, OHIO, *April 14, 1896.*

SIR: I have before me Senate Document No. 137, Part 1 (Fifty-fourth Congress, first session), in which appears a report by Joseph Murray, special agent, Treasury Department, dated December 30, 1894, purporting to be the result of his observations on the seal life of the Pribilof Islands during the season of 1894. This report is, in short, chiefly a reprint of odds and ends which, in form of an appendix, he has selected from the published proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration, at Paris, and largely devoted to what he, in his complete ignorance, believes to be a "correction" of my work in 1890.

I like the idea of being corrected, but I do not propose to allow an ignorant officer of the Government to place on the files of the Senate and Treasury Department a solemn load of stuff like this report—devoted chiefly to myself personally—which has not the first redeeming line of sense or truth in its criticisms, without making to you a full and fair answer to these "corrections," and asking that you give this reply as clear a place on your files as you have given to the charge. I call him "ignorant" because I do not believe him to be malicious. He certainly must be, under the circumstances, painfully ignorant or sadly imposed upon, or both.

Joseph Murray made his first appearance on the seal islands of Alaska during the season of 1889; he arrived there when that life on the hauling grounds and the rookeries had shriveled immensely from that fine form and condition which I recorded it as possessing in 1872–1874.

He knew then, and he knows now, nothing personally of this early fine condition of the fur-seal herd of the Pribilof Islands; he has no authentic guide whatever to that form and number of the fur seals, except what he and all others have gained from my published work in 1875, and my reprint of it in 1881. When he arrived on the seal islands; he had no one to influence him or to prejudice him in favor of any "theory," as he terms certain truths of my report for 1890, or to set him against it.

At the close of his second season's study of the subject on the seal islands, under date of July 31, 1890, he makes known this conclusion in

an official report to the Treasury Department (see Senate Ex. Doc. No. 49, Fifty-first Congress, second session, p. 8):

* * * On learning of the change, the natives held several meetings, and afterwards came to the government house to have my advice as to how they should act in case any material changes were made in their mode of working, government, or the amount of their pay.

The meeting was adjourned from time to time until they had thoroughly discussed the most important questions raised, and at the last meeting, held May 23, they unanimously declared that it was their firm belief and honest opinion that the seals had diminished and would continue to diminish from year to year, because all the male seals had been slaughtered without allowing any to grow to maturity for use on the breeding ground.

I made a note of the suggestion on the journal that day, and I am now fully convinced, by personal observation, that it is only too true, and that the natives were correct in every particular.

Here you have the deliberate opinion of Mr. Murray, under no other influence but his own ability to study the subject. He was poked up by no pressure or jobbers; he was perfectly free and unrestrained. He also heard what the oldest and best natives on St. Paul Island said August 5, 1890; they completely indorsed the sentiments as above given of their St. George brethren, and Mr. Murray himself took down their words to that effect then in my presence, and they were entered that day on the official journal of the St. Paul office.

It was perfectly fair, and is now, to assume that Mr. Murray made that report above cited while in full possession of his senses. But in 1891 he suddenly learns better—*all the natives learn better*—for two green Treasury agents, J. Stanley Brown and W. H. Williams, arrive on the islands early in the season, and these men teach them better, though they never had seen a fur seal before in their lives and had never been near these islands. But they were able to teach Joseph Murray and the natives so much that was new and good that by the end of July, 1891, the said Joseph Murray and the natives all appear in affidavits denying everything that they had known in 1890! It did not take them long to be wise. So much for the value of Mr. Murray's experience and studies.

I desire now to turn to several deliberate and studied misquotations and applications of my report of 1890.

On page 62 Mr. Murray says:

What a pity it is that Mr. Elliott should have forgotten in 1890 the fact that the long drives of from 6 to 12 miles were continued by the Russians as long as they were in possession of the islands * * * without causing diminution or decrease, and that during the entire forty-seven years from 1834 to 1881 the herd increased to marvelous proportions in spite of the long drives and the killing of so many young males, until, as he himself says, three were no more seals when first seen here by human eyes in 1786 and 1787 than there are now in 1881, as far as all evidence goes.

The only "pity" about this point is that Murray did not and does not know that the Russians *killed all the seals that they drove up, little and big*, in these drives of their making. That at once removes the waste and brutality which characterized the methods of 1890, which I describe. These Russian drives never involved the driving up 5,000 seals to reject 4,500 of that number on the killing grounds, and then to drive and redrive these rejections during the balance of the season, culling out only the largest and finest of the herd, until these culls actually came up onto these killing grounds with blind eyes—*white from foundering on the road*. This is what I drew the line on, and this is what the guileless Murray does not know anything about, because those butchers on the islands and the jobbers who controlled them declared it was all right.

I said then, and I say now, the work of driving on the seal islands in 1890 was infamous and wasteful, and my daily record of the work proves it.

The next point that Mr. Murray dwells upon is the question which I raised in 1890, of insufficient virile male life on the rookeries. I will place my deduction against that of the fifteen or twenty natives (who with white men recant their words of 1890) and the vociferous and truly adequate testimony of those gentle butchers who have tenderly clubbed all the seals on the islands since 1870. These men can not do any injury—they never have, says Mr. Murray, in their methods of driving, to redrive and cull the herds. They understand it. They can kill all the surplus bulls down to 10 per cent of the number of that life safely enough. That stops the useless fighting on the rookeries. There is no difference between these wild seals and domestic cattle. And so on.

The man of sense who can stand here full and fairly above the selfish wishes of these land butchers and not fail to observe *that taking annually all of the very finest young male life* as it hauls out on these islands from the 1st of June to the 30th of July is injurious to the best and necessary breeding of this race of animals—such a man I have yet to meet.

I desire now to bring Mr. Murray to book on another point: It is a serious confession of ignorance which he has made in it, and as he insists upon bringing my name into the question, I shall take it up. On pages 99 to 102, inclusive, he labors to make it plain that I have misrepresented the character of the driving in 1872–1874; that I have deliberately misstated the facts when I declared that no driving then for commercial killing was made from Zapadnie and Polavina.

Mr. Murray has been imposed upon, or he wishes to impose upon the public. Unlike myself, he has had no personal knowledge of this driving in 1872–1874, and, eager to appear well informed, he has jumped into the mire of misunderstanding with great expedition. On page 101 he prints a table of drives as made from "*Zapadnie or Southwest Bay*," "*Polavina or Halfway Point*," and "*English Bay*," from 1871 to 1878, inclusive.

Observe the following facts: In 1872–1874, the name "*Zapadnie*," as then applied to the hauling grounds, was the designation given to the hauling ground in English Bay which marked the eastern termination of upper Zapadnie rookery and related wholly to those seals which then hauled out opposite the "*Hair Seal*" rocks in English Bay, less than half a mile west of what is now called Middle Hill. *The natives never made a commercial drive from Southwest Bay in those years*; and they told Colonel Murray so August 5, 1890, and he made the record of their telling him so in my presence. I knew that they told the truth then, because I personally watched the drives for the lessees' quota during the seasons of 1872 and 1874 on St. Paul Island.

This particular hauling ground is still called "*Zapadnie*" to this day, but it is a mile and a quarter east of Southwest Bay killing grounds where the Zapadnie rookery hauling grounds are, and were first drawn upon in 1879, as I have truly asserted in my report of 1890. Murray has confounded the past nomenclature with the present, and does not know any better.

As for Polavina, or Halfway Point, I am entirely right in saying that until 1879 no drives were made from the hauling grounds proper of that great plateau back of the rookery. All these drives quoted in this table of Murray's were made this side of or to the southward of

the Polavina rookery down to Stony Point. In 1879 a salt house was built at Stony Point; then thereafter the drives were extended way up back of Polavina, along over to Dalnoi, beyond Little Polavina rookery.

As for the "English Bay" drives in this table, Murray does not seem to know that nine-tenths of them were made from the Tolstoi sands, all called "*English Bay*" in those days up to Middle Hill, and "Middle Hill" had no name in 1872-1874, for the reason that they seldom came even up to its feet in that period when gathering seal drives.

Therefore, you will observe that I am entirely correct in my statement of fact as to this driving of 1872-1874, and, unlike Mr. Murray, I could not be imposed upon by the land butchers on the islands, who made an easy convert of an inexperienced observer when they led Mr. Murray over their trails, and, taking advantage of his ignorance of the early work and nomenclature, now cause him to make the usual display that follows such tricky cramming.

Again, on page 101, Mr. Murray calls attention to what he calls an error of mine, as I speak of the drives from Zapadnie, in 1879. He says that I have omitted two drives, viz, May 19 and June 7. Of course I did. They were "food-skin" drives, and they never count in any table of the lessees' work that is made by an intelligent man. I am talking about the work of the lessees and nothing else. These "food-skin" drives have no place in a table of the lessees' work, for they are perfectly insignificant—usually made from the very earliest landings of the holluschickie in May or June.

Again, he calls attention to an error, as he calls it, in my statement that no seals were on Zoltoi sands at any or all times during the season of 1890, and ignorantly gives himself up by quoting a record of two drives from Zoltoi, not knowing that "Zoltoi" means for that entry "Zoltoi Bluffs," not the "sands." If he had intelligently read my report of 1890 he would find that I credit these drives to Zoltoi Bluffs, and that, more than that, I make an exact count of these seals (their ages and the standard taken when they are slaughtered) as they come out from the clubbers' hands. This is more than he has ever done toward making himself acquainted with the practical results of over-driving and culling the driven herds. He knows nothing of it.

Finally, Mr. Murray gossips, on page 102, about my having written my report for 1890 in a "hurried manner," and that "bitterness, excitement, and many disappointments attend it all the way through, nearly all of a private character," etc., which he pretends to be cognizant of. He knew nothing about it; he knows nothing now; he never heard me complain of anybody on the islands; I seldom referred to anyone while on the islands in 1890; saw Murray himself only a few days, and never talked in excitement or bitterness, or anything suggestive of it; never spoke to him about his report, and cared less about it. Contrast my impersonal report of 1890 with this garrulous compilation of Mr. Murray, called a study of seal life for 1894; stuffed with that personal fustian, which was carried over to Paris, and which brought us nothing but deserved defeat and great contempt at home and abroad.

Mr. Murray, in concluding, is indiscreet enough to introduce a false and flippant letter of Charles Foster, late Secretary of the Treasury, to show how "numerous and palpable were the inaccuracies all through" my report of 1890.

This comes with bad grace from Messrs. Murray and Foster. I foiled Foster and his associates in the perpetration of a job touching this question of saving the seals, April 22, 1891, and after a contemptible

slur made in the Washington Post February 15, 1895, by some "prominent man" associated with this botch of our case at Paris, I retorted, publishing the details of this shameful transaction in the next issue of that paper, February 16, 1895.

Mr. Murray ought to remember that Charles Foster has been perfectly silent under that lash ever since; he can not answer the charge of his jobbery which I distinctly specify in that article, and all those "distinguished" persons who were associated with him in that job are also silent. It is only the innocent Murray who fails to understand that he can not resurrect them.

On page 345 Murray introduces a letter from the chief seal butcher, Dr. W. W. McIntyre, who has been at the head of the seal clubbers and skinners for the lessees since 1870 up to 1890. This officer patronizes me; he says that I may be able to come as "near the truth as an average observer;" that I am "fairly capable" of "deducing from given facts a theory in regard to the increase or decrease of the seal," but they must be "correct premises" or I shall fail, etc.

I know this Dr. McIntyre very well. I know that in 1872, after he had been three seasons on the Pribilof Islands, I asked him leading questions in the summer of that year as to the numbers and habits of the seals. He invariably answered me that he was unable to give me the points because he was up there for no other purpose than that of getting the annual quota of skins, and he had no time or inclination to look these matters up. He did not know then the relative numbers even of seals on St. George Island as compared with that on St. Paul Island—had never been on a St. George rookery in all this time. He then told me the truth—he did not attempt to lie to me—and I respected him for it.

But he has been backsliding since. He appears in sundry affidavits—long and detailed affidavits in the make-up of the Paris case—as having made a survey of these rookeries in 1871. He had made a "map" of them, and upon his "map," this figment of his imagination, the astute General Foster, who was the agent in charge of the case of the United States, places the dull plagiarism of the work of 1891, so as to show the decrease of the seal herds in that time. I hold a letter from Dr. McIntyre dated July 12, 1873, in which he says:

I am surprised to learn [from me] that so great disproportion exists in the relative sizes of the rookeries on the two islands, but as I know nothing of the matter personally, never having visited any of the St. George rookeries, I have no reason to doubt the correctness of your statements.

But in 1890-1892 this same Dr. McIntyre blossomed out in the American case as one of its chief informants and thoroughly posted above all men for credence as to the early life on these rookeries. McIntyre, however, unwittingly gave away his case in 1888.* He then, under oath before a committee of the House of Representatives, declared that in 1882 he began to have difficulty in getting his quota of choice seals, and then began to drive from distant and hitherto untouched places. I found his trail all over the islands in 1890, and truthfully described the work.

Mr. Murray brings in another victim. He produces E. J. Phelps, the distinguished counsel of the United States at Paris before the Bering Sea Tribunal, and this able lawyer is quoted in detail to show what an ignoramus I am. This is the same Mr. Phelps who, under date of September 4, 1893,† writes to Secretary of State Gresham,

* H. R. Fiftieth Congress, second session; report No. 3883, p. 118.

† Senate Ex. Doc. No. 67, Fifty-third Congress, third session, pp. 23-26.

declaring that he has won a great victory, that he has secured regulations which will break up and destroy pelagic sealing, and so save the seals. This ignorance of what he had secured was no greater than his ignorance of me and my work. But, it does seem hardly credible that this Mr. Phelps, after pounding away at this seal question for two years, should have come out at the end so simple and feeble in his understanding of the result of his long-drawn-out efforts.

Very respectfully, your friend and servant,

HENRY W. ELLIOTT.

Hon. R. F. PETTIGREW,
United States Senate.

o